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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 7 November 1991, at 10 a.m.

President:	Mr. SHIHABI	(Saudi Arabia)
later:	Mr. AYALA LASSO (Vice-President)	(Ecuador)
later:	Mr. SHIHABI (President)	(Saudi Arabia)

- Critical economic situation in Africa:

  (a) Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990

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(b) Report of the Secretary-General

(c) Draft resolution

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 21

CRITICAL ECONOMIC SITUATION IN AFRICA:

(a) REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR AFRICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT 1986-1990 (A/46/41)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/46/324 and Add.1)

(c) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/46/41, sect. IV)

The PRESIDENT: I call on the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, to introduce the report of the Committee.

Mr. HUSLID (Norway), Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990: I apologize for speaking from my seat. As you said, Mr. President, I am called on to report to the General Assembly on behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee; however, I see that the Hall is nearly empty, so I wonder how much sense there is in my introducing this report to an Assembly which in fact is not assembled. I am putting this question because I do not think that to introduce the report in these circumstances would enhance our debate.

The PRESIDENT: I am sorry that the Assembly Hall is not as full as it should be, but our experience shows that as soon as we open the meeting, members begin to file in. Thus, I hope that immediately after you start introducing your report, you will have a good audience, but under no circumstances can we hold up the meeting until everybody arrives. I am sure your experience is the equal of mine in this respect: if we are to finish on

(The President)

schedule, we must start on schedule. We have already called on all delegations through the public address system to proceed to the Assembly Hall.

Does the representative of Nigeria wish to speak on a point of order?

Mr. ADEKUOYE (Nigeria): With your permission, Mr. President, I should like to point out that consultations are still taking place. It was our understanding that the Chairman of the African Group for the current month would be in touch with you concerning our desire that consideration of this item be postponed.

The PRESIDENT: I have been in touch with the Chairman of the African Group, and we arranged that the general debate on the item should proceed but that voting on any draft resolution should be postponed until agreement had been reached.

Mr. HUSLID (Norway), Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990: If I have allowed myself to raise the question of attendance, it is because this morning I am speaking, not on behalf of any country or group of countries, but as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, mandated to present its report. I therefore felt that better attendance might be desirable.

However, it is a great honour for me to present the report, even though it might be said that it speaks for itself. Nevertheless, some explanatory remarks may be useful, and I shall concentrate on the work of the Ad Hoc Committee and its results.

It may be recalled that the mandate given to the Ad Hoc Committee by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session - to conduct a final review of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 - set two distinct tasks: to make an assessment of the implementation of the Programme; and to work out measures for sustained and sustainable growth and development in Africa beyond 1991.

(Mr. Huslid, Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990)

I am glad to report that these two tasks were accomplished. The results are contained in chapters I and II, respectively, of the annex to document A/46/41. The main work leading up to the production of these two chapters was done in two Working Groups - one of them chaired by Ambassador Majorie Thorpe of Trinidad and Tobago; the other by Ambassador Jamsheed Marker of Pakistan. I should like to express my sincere appreciation - indeed, the sincere appreciation of all the delegations that participated - to Ambassador Thorpe and Ambassador Marker for their great work. But for their skill, patience and dedication, the result that was achieved would not have been possible. I should like to thank also the other officers and the representatives of the Secretariat who worked closely with me, both before and during the substantive session.

As regards the assessment of the implementation of the Programme of Action, I shall not dwell on that part of our report. No doubt others will do that. In any case, the Ad Hoc Committee's evaluation includes a full record of the various facts and circumstances that influenced the implementation of the Programme. However, I should like to offer some comments on chapter II of the annex, which contains what is called the United Nations new Agenda for the development of Africa in the 1990s. In this chapter the Committee presents a programme that

"has as its priority objectives the accelerated transformation, integration, diversification and growth of the African economies, in

(Mr. Huslid, Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990)

order to strengthen them within the world economy, reduce their vulnerability to external shocks and increase their dynamism, internalize the process of development and enhance self-reliance." (A/46/41, p. 21, para. 6)

This is certainly an ambitious programme, and one might ask whether the new Agenda is an adequate document that warrants the setting of such far-reaching goals.

In this connection I should like to make a few remarks. The new Agenda is certainly not a perfect document - if such a thing exists. It has its weaknesses, both as regards form and as regards content. I venture to say that this is unavoidable, given the fact that the final form of the document was hammered out in a marathon negotiating session, during the afternoon and night of 13-14 September, between Government representatives with somewhat different ideas and perceptions and - not least - with different instructions. No doubt the document could have been better. However, it is a document of compromise, arrived at - admittedly, ad referendum - by all participating delegates, who, in spite of many constraints, were bent on achieving a result: a result for Africa and, thus, for the rest of the world also.

I think that, on the whole, the result is not a bad one, and I should like to underline why that is my view. The document, which should be regarded as a political document, makes clear the common recognition that, although

(Mr. Huslid, Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990)

Africa's development is primarily the responsibility of Africans - it must be so - the international community accepts the principle of shared responsibility and full partnership with Africa and commits itself to giving full and tangible support to the African efforts. I think that such a statement, solemnly accepted by the General Assembly, is of considerable importance for the decade ahead.

The new Agenda is in several respects different from the old Programme of Action, but in one respect is identical to it.

(Mr. Huslid, Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990)

This is the division of the programme into two parts: first, what Africa commits itself to do, and secondly, what the international community commits itself to do. Each part contains a number of commitments and objectives in several important fields. For Africa these include inter alia: regional and subregional cooperation and integration; the democratization process; investments; the human dimension; environment and development; population and development; agriculture and rural development; South-South cooperation; and the role of non-governmental organizations.

The responsibility and commitments of the international community relate inter alia to: Africa's debt problem; the flow of resources; commodities; support for the diversification of the African economies; trade; and regional economic integration. These are all basic elements.

I think that the new Agenda is a document of faith: of faith in Africa and its peoples to build their future, and of faith in the world community to give its support to that endeavour. An annual growth rate for Africa of 6 per cent in real terms is laid down in the Programme as a desirable objective; although admittedly no one can guarantee in advance that it will be reached, it is a goal to strive for. In this endeavour further measures are envisaged to help alleviate Africa's debt burden. Efforts will continue with a view to providing additional resource flows, and a special study evaluating the feasibility of a diversification fund for Africa's commodities will be undertaken with a view to increasing diversification of the African economies.

(Mr. Huslid, Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990)

No doubt some of the goals and commitments stated in the Programme could have been more clearly worded, and in some instances they are merely enumerated; but they are present as important points of reference and policy guidance for future work and action. Here I must add something which I think is of particular importance and relevance to our evaluation of the Programme. The commitments mentioned must be seen in connection with the follow-up, monitoring and assessment machinery that also forms part of the new Agenda. This machinery, prescribed in some detail, provides for monitoring of the Agenda at regular intervals throughout the 1990s by high-level United Nations bodies, that is, by the General Assembly and by the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council. A final review and assessment by the General Assembly is planned for the year 2000.

I think it can be said, therefore, that because of the new Agenda Africa will be at the centre of attention in the United Nations throughout the coming decade. This focus is perhaps the most important feature of the Programme which I trust we shall adopt. The new Agenda is not an end result but a basis to build on. For my part I recommend it without hesitation; indeed I appeal to members to give the United Nations Agenda for the development of Africa in the 1990s their support and thus to confer upon it the formal status of a General Assembly programme. Africa has great inherent potential for growth and development, both in material and, not least, in human resources. But it needs the assistance, support and solidarity of all of us through the United

(Mr. Huslid, Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990)

Nations. Let us unanimously give our assurance of that support through our action in the Assembly.

Mr. McLEAN (Canada): It is a pleasure for me, having led Canada's delegation this past September, during the final review and appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, to address the Assembly on the vitally important issue of Africa's economic recovery and development and to offer some reinforcement to the views of Mr. Huslid.

Much has changed in Africa in recent days. These changes deserve our recognition and endorsement. At the Summit of Commonwealth leaders in Harare last month, Prime Minister Mulroney stated that democratic development and human rights are fundamental to sustainable development. This recognition is widely shared in Africa. We have seen, for example, the independence of Namibia, free and democratic changes in government in Benin and Zambia, signs of hope in the transitional process undertaken in Ethiopia and new developments in South Africa. Other countries too numerous to list have committed themselves to the democratic process. Economic growth and democracy are mutually reinforcing.

This new hope in Africa contrasts sharply with the first half of the 1980s, a time characterized by economic calamity and by prolonged and catastrophic famine across the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Members will recall that we met in 1986 to launch the United Nations Programme of Action

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for African Economic Recovery and Development, a blueprint for the development and support of policy reforms and for attention to the most vulnerable elements of African society.

The Programme of Action may not have been an unqualified success, but - as the final review and appraisal of the Programme noted almost two months ago - the accomplishments of the last half decade should not be undersold. Indeed, nobody underestimates the profound commitment made by numerous African States to the economic, social and political reform necessary to halt the devastating economic slide. I believe we have established the base upon which a solid framework for African economic recovery throughout the 1990s can be constructed.

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We must, none the less, recognize the challenges that remain before us. Much is yet to be done, by the developing and the developed world alike.

Fundamental to economic recovery and growth in Africa is a macroeconomic and regulatory environment that can realistically be described as one that is enabling. First, basic reform of unsustainable price-support programmes; secondly, export diversification; thirdly, the lifting of import restrictions; fourthly, realistic exchange rates; fifthly, an expanded role for the private sector; and sixthly, the trimming of Government bureaucracies - all of these and more are needed to provide the right economic framework for growth. About half of Africa's countries have adopted major policy reforms and many are experiencing early and positive results.

Economic reform, however, is not an end in itself: it is but one element of a long-term strategy for development and growth. New policy priorities are being seen as an integrated network of factors determining practical, effective strategies for sustainable growth. These include respect for basic human rights; good government; greater transparency; structural adjustment, effectively implemented to ensure equity and sustainability; providing a sound environment for private-sector growth; ensuring that the human element of development - health, education and other needs of the most vulnerable - are met; and population limitation and its related impact on the alleviation of poverty and on the environment.

If Africa is to avert hunger and provide its growing population with productive jobs and rising incomes, its economies need to grow, and agricultural production is the only realistic source of this growth. Economic diversification can take place in tandem with an enhanced commodity sector and in fact, as the report of the Secretary-General's Expert Group on Africa's

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Commodity Problems points out, commodity production and trade must be used as the motor for economic expansion and diversification.

Canada supports efforts to liberalize the trade of commodities and has supported efforts to diversify and develop non-traditional exports to reduce the vulnerability of African economies to price fluctuations. Canada has joined other donors in endorsing assistance programmes which take account of adjustment needs and has also actively supported a generous approach to the debt problems of debt-distressed low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa. "Peace is an indispensable prerequisite for development", as the United Nations new Agenda for the development of Africa in the 1990s so rightly points out. Military expenditures in Africa can and should now be reduced and resources can and should be redirected to socio-economic growth and development.

Africa is a clear priority in Canadian bilateral and multilateral assistance: 47 per cent of all Canadian bilateral and multilateral assistance is directed to Africa and a total of Can$ 1.2 billion was disbursed in 1990-1991 to Africa through various channels. All Canadian assistance is on a grant basis and Canada has taken measures which have eliminated all outstanding development-assistance debts of all sub-Saharan African countries.

In the multilateral context, Canada has urged creditors to adopt a generous approach to the debt problems of the poorest and has advocated efforts to increase resource flows to Africa. We have offered concessional rates on rescheduled official credits in the Paris Club to sub-Saharan countries under the so-called Toronto terms. Canada strongly supports the need for significant additional debt reduction through the Paris Club, going well beyond the Toronto terms. We committed Can$ 829 million for the ninth

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replenishment of the International Development Association and we will provide Can$ 360 million in support of the World Bank Special Program for Africa (SPA) II 1991-1993. This disbursement represents a 30-per-cent increase from the revised Canadian pledge to SPA I.

While prospects for recovery are far from secure, there is a firm basis for cautious optimism. There are certainly no easy solutions, and it will not be easy to meet the requirements of these enormous tasks at a time when most of the industrialized world's economies are likely to experience only very limited growth. As apparent as Africa's economic plight is, development programmes must also consider the policy framework of the recipient country. It must be demonstrated at this time of scarce resources that funds allocated to Africa will be used in a practical and effective manner. It is up to us - all of us collectively - to ensure that our efforts are demonstrably practical and effective, because they are so clearly and dramatically needed.

The United Nations will play a major role in the implementation of Africa's economic recovery and growth. The ad referendum text adopted by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole for the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Plan for African Economic Recovery and Development called for a United Nations new Agenda for the development of Africa in the 1990s. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation has been entrusted with the task of ensuring effective follow-up within the United Nations system. It is my hope and indeed expectation that a core group of key United Nations agencies will be invited to collaborate actively and closely, within existing resources, on their programmes to ensure the success of this new Agenda.

Mr. VAN SCHAIK (Netherlands): I shall speak on behalf of the European Community and its 12 member States.

I wish first of all to thank Ambassador Huslid for his introductory remarks. I fully endorse his appeal that the Assembly should unanimously give its assurance of support through its actions for Africa.

A few weeks ago the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Huslid, concluded its work with the adoption, by consensus, of the "Assessment of the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990" and the "United Nations new Agenda for the development of Africa in the 1990s". The new Agenda contains commitments by the African countries and by the international community to undertake concrete action to improve the development prospects of the African continent. We are asked during this session of the General Assembly to adopt this Agenda and the review mechanism proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole for monitoring its implementation.

Before commenting on this issue, I wish to recall the statement we made during the general debate in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole in which we pledged the commitment of the European Community and its member States to Africa and indicated our willingness to participate constructively in international efforts to improve the development prospects for Africa.

The review of the Programme of Action took place against the background of a number of important changes within Africa and in the external environment in which Africa is operating. We have witnessed during the last few years a growing realization in Africa that people should be at the heart of any

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development process and that development should be carried out by and for the people. This realization formed the basis of the Arusha Conference in February 1990. The Charter adopted by that Conference became a catalyst for political reform in Africa. Indignation regarding the waste of scarce resources on military expenditure, civil strife and civil war has grown. Attitudes towards responsible leadership, democracy and participation, human rights, accountability and the rule of law have become more positive. Africa now accepts that it bears the primary responsibility for its own development.

Within Africa there was a growing awareness at the end of the 1980s that economic policy concepts were often ill-founded and indeed impractical. The resulting unsustainable economic situation was dealt with by measures to foster internal structural adjustment, curtailing unsustainable budget and external deficits, and by improving resource allocations. We feel that most African countries are now accepting the importance of structural adjustment and the necessity to pursue it, that development and growth can be sustainable only if environmental concerns are taken into account and that there is an urgent need to reduce population growth. There is also a growing recognition of the positive benefits to be derived from regional cooperation.

Turning now to the international environment, as we all know, fundamental changes took place in Central and Eastern Europe during the period of the Programme of Action, changes which not only substantially altered the political landscape in the northern hemisphere, but will also have an impact beyond the geographical boundaries of this hemisphere. As far as the general economic situation of African countries is concerned, the external debt problems of many of them increased substantially during the Programme period,

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thereby seriously threatening their long-term development prospects. Commodity export earnings, on which many African economies still largely depend, decreased substantially over the review period.

On the development strategy for Africa, a broad consensus emerged: that it should be placed in a long-term perspective; that it should be people-centered; that sound macro-economic policies remain necessary; and that due attention should be paid to human resources. Increasingly, African countries and their development partners agreed on the fact that human development requires economic growth and that in order to be sustainable this economic growth will have to give priority attention to human development. Furthermore, it is generally recognized that the alleviation of poverty should be given priority attention.

After having sketched the background against which we saw the review and evaluation of the Programme, let me briefly indicate what the main elements were, and still are, of the approach of the European Community and its member States to the problems of Africa in general and the review of the Programme in particular. First, we wish to acknowledge that the Programme has not entirely fulfilled the expectation that it would function as a catalyst for positive changes in Africa, owing in part to its broad, general character. We participated, in the course of September, in the drafting of an agenda for action, in order to give a firmer common basis to efforts to be undertaken by the African countries and the international community to achieve an improvement in the prospects for Africa.

With regard to developments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, let me stress that our official assistance directed to these countries is additional to and does not reduce or divert from official development

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assistance to developing countries. Moreover, the transition in Central and Eastern Europe also offers opportunities to and challenges for developing countries, particularly in the longer term.

A successful conclusion to the Uruguay Round would stimulate world economic development and thus the demand for African exports. It would also give a clear signal as to what products to diversify into, both horizontally and vertically.

Further thinking is called for in the area of the stabilization of commodity export earnings. The European Community and its member States have put considerable efforts into this area. We have realized that stabilization through loans that ultimately have to be reimbursed does not suffice. This is why we have reformed STABEX and SYSMIN and made them work fully on a grant basis. It is important that other developed countries undertake compa efforts in the commodities field.

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However, in order to make the commodity sector in Africa more of an engine for sustainable growth, further processing of commodities should be undertaken by the producing countries themselves, recognizing that open and transparent markets are essential if this endeavour is to be successful. The competitiveness of African commodities should be enhanced through good domestic policies.

African countries will have to strengthen internal policies aimed at restoring budget and external financial imbalances and increasing local savings. In order to encourage more private flows to Africa, there is a need for sound economic policies and efficient and accountable public institutions. As far as the contribution of the international community in this area is concerned, we support efforts aimed at increasing the flow of resources to Africa, decreasing the debt burden, enhancing the quality of official development assistance, taking into account the internationally agreed targets for such assistance, and assisting Africa to increase its export earnings.

On the issue of official development assistance, let me reiterate that the Community as a whole already gives 0.13 per cent of its gross national product to the least developed countries, and its ongoing efforts should allow it to allocate more than 0.15 per cent before the end of the decade. Some member States have already exceeded this 0.15 per cent and will continue to do so and even increase their efforts.

As regards the debt problems of African countries, additional debt relief measures going well beyond the relief granted under the Toronto terms should now receive the utmost priority in the Paris Club, resulting in substantial debt-relief measures at an early date for the poorest, most indebted

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countries. The improvements in the consolidation terms may prove to be insufficient for some of the lower-middle-income countries. The London economic summit agreed that the Paris Club would continue to examine the special situation of some lower-middle-income countries on a case-by-case basis. We also note the proposals for a general framework for concessional treatment of the debt of lower-middle-income countries that have initiated economic reform programmes.

Now the moment has come, at this session of the Assembly, to give a final judgement on the outcome of the review, embodied in the two documents we have before us - the assessment of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, and the United Nations new Agenda for the development of Africa in the 1990s. Let me stress at the outset that we welcome the fact that it was possible to agree on these documents by consensus. Whereas the Agenda could prove to be a useful tool in guiding the efforts of the African countries to foster their development and the support given by the international community and the United Nations system for these efforts, the assessment contains valuable lessons for the future. In this respect, there are important issues to be addressed, such as debt and financial resources and commodities. Other important lessons are the need for sustained economic reform, which has been pursued by only two thirds of the African countries, and the need for this reform to be underpinned by good governance, with accountable institutions and Governments as well as respect for human rights.

While the Agenda is being implemented, it will be essential to keep in view other important mechanisms such as the Second Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, and the Global Coalition for Africa. Close

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cooperation at both the intergovernmental and the Secretariat level are called for. The new Agenda represents a careful and also a fragile balance between the points of view of the various participants in the discussion. We do not believe that we should try to improve this new Agenda further during this session of the General Assembly. We can also accept the proposed monitoring and evaluation arrangements that will allow us to address the problems with which the African continent has to cope at regular intervals in the United Nations system.

In the preamble to the new Agenda, it is stated that

"Africa's development is primarily the responsibility of Africans. The international community accepts the principle of shared responsibility and full partnership with Africa and therefore commits itself to giving full and tangible support to the African efforts." (A/46/41, annex, II, para. 1)

Let me conclude this statement by emphasizing that the European community and its member States will do their utmost to live up to the commitments we undertook a few weeks ago.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): I should like to thank those delegations that were present when the meeting was called to order this morning.

The first speaker, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole, was rather hesitant about introducing the report of the Ad Hoc Committee to the General Assembly and making his very important statement when so few delegations were present in the Hall. I should therefore be grateful if delegations would always be in the Hall at the specified time for the opening of the meeting. I hope that all delegations will cooperate in this respect.

Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): While the attention of economics and political experts is focused on the radical changes in Eastern Europe, the African continent sinks deeper into an abyss of poverty and epidemics under the burden of external debt and looks up to the States of the world to keep their promises of support made a few years ago to set the continent on the road to development. Therefore, the General Assembly meets today to consider this question so that it may adopt the necessary measures to face up to what the Secretary-General, in his report (A/46/324), calls the greatest developmental challenge at the end of the century.

The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development adopted by the General Assembly in 1986 to help the African States to rectify the situation and revitalize their development has not achieved its objectives. Therefore, the Secretary-General's report is a warning that the African continent faces a difficult period unless there is an acceptable level of development that would compensate its peoples for the social sacrifices those peoples had to make over the last decade through the implementation of structural adjustment programmes and the repayment of external debts.

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The African States have demonstrated both individually and collectively their unswerving determination to implement the recommendations included in the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 which aimed at putting the economies of the continent on the threshold of growth during those years. Furthermore, the African countries have followed the advice of the experts of the rich countries and the international monetary institutions. They have adopted structural adjustment and other policies which aimed at developing agricultural and all allied sectors of their economies, combating desertification and improving the utilization of their human resources.

On the other hand, as is demonstrated in document A/46/387, the international community, with the exception of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations, did not carry out fully its part of the compact, as the international support that was envisaged within the framework of the Programme was disappointing and well below the expectations of the Programme.

In addition, as is stated in paragraph 217 of the Secretary-General's report (A/46/324), there have been other major factors that hindered the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action, such as acts of destabilization. Indeed, the policies of the South African apartheid regime are directly responsible for the critical economic situation in numerous African countries. Those are policies which breed economic and political destabilization in southern Africa. The damage sustained by the States of the region over the past decade alone at the hands of the South African apartheid regime far exceeds the aggregate of the assistance received by those countries from the developed countries.

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The Economic Commission for Africa, in a report issued on 14 October 1989, entitled "Acts of Destabilization by South Africa and Economic Costs Incurred by the Front-line States in their Resistance to Apartheid" reaffirmed that the policies adopted by the racist South Africa regime with the aim of stirring up trouble have killed two and a half million Africans in southern Africa and have cost the front-line States $60 billion over the period 1980-1988. This is the exorbitant price the neighbours of South Africa have paid for South Africa's deliberate strategy aimed at keeping the front-line States under its economic tutelage.

The report also indicates that the ultimate objective of the South African racist regime's policy is to force the front-line States to spend so much on armaments programmes that they will have no other option but to accept apartheid or a modified form thereof. The Economic Commission for Africa has indicated that this policy is the fundamental cause of the economic decline of the region.

That is why it is not surprising to see that Africa's economic and social situation has worsened over the period of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, and in fact has been the opposite of the objectives the Programme was supposed to achieve. The rate of economic growth has only very slightly increased, while per capita income and rates of native investment in the gross national product have declined.

Statistics show that the rates of growth of the gross national product in several African countries have dropped radically during the period of the implementation of the Programme, as compared with the first half of the

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previous decade, 1980-1985. Growth rates have risen in some countries and remained at the same level in others.

Native investment in the gross national product has also dropped, throughout the continent, from 24 per cent in 1980 to 19.2 per cent in 1986 to 17.6 per cent in 1989, and stabilized at about 16 per cent over the period of the implementation of the Programme.

In the wake of this drop in economic indicators, the social situation worsened further throughout the entire African continent. The Secretary-General's report paints a sombre picture of the deterioration of education and health services and of the increase in illiteracy in most of the countries of the region, as well as a drop in per capita income in 20 States in 1989 as compared to 1980.

The Secretary-General points out in his report that the only option for Africa is to reverse the current slide into utter destitution by breaking out of the trap of decline into growth. The report highlights the efforts of the African States in the areas of popular participation in development and the implementation of structural adjustment policies despite their economic and ecological effects.

The Secretary-General concludes that the African continent will not be able to face up to the challenges of the 1990s while it stands in need, according to his proposals, for a new global compact for development that should have three goals: first, economic diversification; second, the acceleration of the rate of growth to 6 per cent; and, third, enhanced human development, improved job opportunities, improved services in the areas of health and education, equal status for women, child mortality reduction and

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the provision of drinkable water, since United Nations statistics show that only one third of Africans have supplies of drinkable water.

One can ensure high growth rates over the coming years only if the debt burden is alleviated. This is much more important than governmental assistance has shown so far, since the African debt now exceeds $270 billion and erects an enormous barrier in the way of African development as debt servicing alone swallows up 30 per cent of the continent's export earnings and deprives it of $21 billion.

The Secretary-General notes in his report that debt-scheduling solutions have been limited so far to deferment of repayments. As a result, the debt has continued to accumulate. Therefore, the solution is debt cancellation, especially of those debts which Africa will have to repay in future years.

The Secretary-General insists in his report on the need for the international community, especially the rich countries, to adopt bolder measures to deal with the debt situation in line with what has been done in the cases of some countries. We support the Secretary-General's proposal that the rich countries should cancel those official debts advanced to Africa together with other official debts relating to export promotion, should write down commercial debts and reduce the remaining debts through initiatives such as debt-equity swaps, debt for environment schemes, poverty alleviation and combating epidemics. He also proposes - and we support him in this - that the donor countries contribute to the reduction of the servicing obligations of debts owed to multilateral financial institutions which now accounts for about 40 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa's debt-servicing obligations, as well as rectifying the situation with regard to the commodities exported by the African continent.

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

It is therefore clear that the circumstances which led to the adoption of the Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development remain as compelling as they were in 1986. Africa is still the poorest and least developed of the world's continents.

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

Thus, we find in the league of the world's 41 least developed countries 28 African countries. Food imports are on the increase. Infant mortality now stands at a horrendous 120 per thousand. Sixty-five per cent of adults are still illiterate. Only 23 per cent of Africans have clean drinking water. Industrial potential is not fully utilized. Unemployment is rampant and per capita income, the individual's share of the gross national product, continues to deline.

Therefore, the African countries have come to the conclusion, in the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole (A/46/41) that Africa does not need yet another programme, since a repeat, even with modifications, of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development is not expected to lead, in the current international political and economic climate, to any results that would be better than those of the previous Programme.

Under these circumstances, the African countries have put forward an initiative that is commensurate with the situation and the challenges which face Africa at the beginning of the 1990s. That initiative took the form of a new agenda for cooperation between Africa and the international community that focuses on the totality of the problems which would impede progress and prosperity for Africa if not solved. The agenda also aims at ensuring the exertion of African efforts towards development goals.

My delegation fully supports this initiative expecially as the African countries, both individually and collectively, continue to adopt public policies that aim at ensuring a favourable climate for putting the continent on the right track. Therefore, the international community must renew its

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

commitment to support Africa's efforts aimed at dealing with its socio-economic problems on the basis of the agenda adopted by Africa itself for the 1990s, as contained in document A/46/41.

The difficulties of the African continent are an integral part of the difficulties of the developing world as a whole. All the countries of the developing world are engaged in one and the same battle against backwardness, hunger, ignorance, disease and natural disasters. My country, Syria, is also a developing country. Despite its limited capabilities, it continues to give necessary assistance to the sisterly African countries, in response to historic and geographical ties. The channels of support and assistance provided by Syria can be divided into two categories. First, there is the support we provide to Africa through Arab action, in which we have absolute faith, and which is embodied in Arab-African cooperation. My country has put all of its available potential at the service of that cooperation in order to promote it and lay down its foundations. It now has its institutions, structures and funds. Secondly, we support Africa through bilateral cooperation and through the agreements we have with several friendly African States.

The United Nations, which has played an extremely important role in assisting African peoples to accede to their political independence, must now meet a still greater challenge, namely, to assist the African continent in obtaining the support of the international community on a basis of respect for the sovereignty of all States and for their independence, in particular since we know that the United Nations Programme has helped in focusing the attention of African and non-African Governments on some of Africa's basic economic and

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

human problems. The adoption of the new programme, contained in document A/46/41, would give the international community yet another opportunity to renew its commitment to support Africa's efforts to stand at the threshold of development.

We hope that this decade will see an active awakening of the African continent that will enable it to engage in land reform in order for it to meet its needs and enter the age of technology and modern development and reaffirm its presence, as advicated by the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, when he commented on the unprecedented famine and economic decline experienced by the continent. We know very well that there are no countries or regions that are really intrinsically poor, since poverty and wealth are historical phenomena. Therefore, these trends can be reversed. Indeed, neither the past nor geography make such a situation an inescapable must. It is mankind's intelligence, will to work and firmness of commitment that can build the present and determine the future.

Mr. KANKAANNIEMI (Finland): First, let me say how delighted I am to address the General Assembly in my capacity as the first Finnish Minister for Development Cooperation. I am particularly pleased to speak to this body on the issue of Africa. Africa has had, and continues to have, the highest priority in Finnish development cooperation.

Despite all the other breathtaking events and new demands elsewhere in the world, Africa must remain at the centre of the international community's attention. Africa, in general, has experienced an unprecedented economic decline over the last decade. The five-year period covered by the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development has

(Mr. Kankaanniemi, Finland)

not, unfortunately, witnessed a change for the better in most of the African countries, and in some of them the situation has worsened economically and politically so that they have to rely heavily on humanitarian emergency assistance.

Five years ago the Programme of Action was adopted unanimously. Now it is our task to make the final assessment of its implementation on the basis of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole. I should like to thank the Chairman of the Committee, Ambassador Martin Huslid of Norway, for his untiring efforts in the drafting of a final report to the Assembly. As is often the case, the final assessment is to be made here by the General Assembly. It is this body that should also draw and analyse the lessons to be learned from the past and provide guidance for the road ahead.

In retrospect, the Programme of Action was an impressive United Nations achievement. It was based on the strength of the Organization, taking advantage of its position to deal with cross-sectoral issues and interlinkages.*

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* Mr. Ayala Lasso (Ecuador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Kankaanniemi, Finland)

The weakness of the Programme is, however, that it has been drawn up in the conference rooms of the United Nations, somewhat in isolation from those who decide on economic and other sectoral policies and from other institutions that necessarily need to be involved. Without the full commitment of those decision makers and those institutions, and without the possibility for the United Nations to implement much of the Programme itself, there is little for us at the United Nations to do but hope and pray that others will take the Programme we have drawn up for implementation.

I am drawing up this picture in order to pose the following questions. Can we expect the new Agenda for the development of Africa in the 1990's, if agreed upon by us, to lead to better results? Does it carry a sufficiently strong message to the parties concerned that having more vigorous and effective implementation of agreed programmes is what we need? My understanding is that what has been spelled out in the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development is by and large still fully valid. Last year we agreed on the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, the Paris Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and the Fourth International Development Strategy. There should be ways and means to emphasize the specific issues and priorities of those programmes that are of special concern to Africa.

What we need to do is, in my view, to continue to emphasize to all parties concerned that Africa is and must continue to be highest priority in terms of development. To the parties concerned we have to send also a strong message on the need for them to fulfil their part of the programmes that are already agreed upon in the Programme of Action and the others I mentioned.

(Mr. Kankaanniemi, Finland)

And we must see to it that the operational machinery of the United Nations system does its part effectively. To the African Governments we need to stress again that they have the primary responsibility to develop their own societies, countries and continent. Change must begin and be carried out from within. Change cannot be imported from outside, and that would not be accepted either. There is a need to continue expanding the structural adjustment programmes in order to heal the basis of the economies. Sound economic policies, good governance and wider participation of the private sector should follow. It is heartening to see that such a large number of African countries have already embarked on this road. They should be encouraged to continue and be supported on the way. And others should join in. There is a need to mobilize all possible domestic resources by savings and by cuts in military spending and there is a need to use conducive policies to attract both domestic and foreign private capital to support the new economic path.

But economic reform alone is not sufficient. For development to succeed and gain speed there is a need to unleash the potential and aspirations of the people also in the political field. Democracy and pluralism is the other side of the coin of development. The needs of all people have to be heard and taken into account for development to be sustainable. In this connection I wish to salute Zambia and other countries which are following its example of smooth transition to a pluralistic political system.

To succeed in its endeavours Africa must get sufficient support, financially and otherwise. To the Paris Club we need, therefore, to send a strong signal that the debt burden of Africa is about to suffocate the indebted countries. Without exceptional and rapid debt relief measures,

(Mr. Kankaanniemi, Finland)

particularly for countries which are undertaking serious adjustment efforts, there will be little hope for development. To the Bretton Woods institutions our message should be that structural adjustment programmes are showing encouraging results in a number of countries. Therefore, there is a need to continue providing advice and assistance to this end. There is a continuous need to refine the programmes and make them even more suitable for individual countries. To this end the countries' own planning and management capacity needs to be developed and increased. To those dealing with trade issues we need to stress the importance, to African countries in particular, of free access to the market and a successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round. Their export potential and selection of products are limited and they are therefore exceptionally vulnerable to any trade barriers, tariff or non-tariff.

To donor countries the message should be that Africa needs an increased amount and more efficient utilization of development aid. And all donor countries should have Africa as a priority in their bilateral programmes too. I dare say this, although Finland has been forced, owing to the severe recession we are experiencing, to cut its aid appropriations temporarily. Even so, Africa receives the bulk of our aid. To the United Nations system we need to stress that its input is required, particularly in the field of human resources development and the social sectors. In Africa, investment in the people is of vital importance in order to create a lasting foundation for development; in order to be effective in its policy advice and in implementation of the programmes, the operational capacity of the United Nations must be strengthened.

(Mr. Kankaanniemi, Finland)

Those are the kind of messages we need to send in order to get the maximum support to Africa, and this in the form we have envisaged in the programmes. The question is: What is the best way to deliver the messages? If there is general agreement that the adoption of the new Agenda before us is the most efficient way, Finland would, in its usual constructive manner, join the others. However, in my view, we should also consider other reinforcing measures. In addition to the messages we send to the parties concerned, the priority that we give to Africa should be reflected in a number of other resolutions which concern substantive issues; the priority for Africa would thereby be reflected throughout the system. Any Africa-specific issues which cannot be covered under other items, of course, warrant their own place here under this agenda item.

(Mr. Kankaanniemi, Finland)

There is a need to follow up and monitor closely the development of Africa and the individual countries in Africa. The United Nations should, in close cooperation with the World Bank, prepare a report on developments in mid-decade, to allow for a meaningful report based on a sufficient timespan. The report should contain the type of messages I mentioned and proposals for appropriate action. In the meantime, there is every good reason for the United Nations to continue focusing attention on Africa.

Mr. SEZAKI (Japan): My delegation would like to join the delegations of other Member States in welcoming the outcome of the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee which conducted the final review and assessment of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Recovery and Development. This meeting was an important opportunity for the international community to reaffirm its solidarity with African countries, many of which are facing great difficulties in their efforts to achieve economic recovery and development.

The United Nations new Agenda for development of Africa in the 1990s, which is before us, is the reaffirmation of our common understanding of how best to respond to these challenges. My delegation is particularly happy to note that the new Agenda reaffirms the basic principle that the African States have primary responsibility for their own development, while at the same time reaffirming that the international community has responsibilities and remains committed to providing them with support. The aspirations of the African States are expressed throughout the new Agenda, and, needless to say, it will require tremendous efforts to realize them. At the same time, my delegation believes that the international community, as their partners, must whole-heartedly render its strong assistance.

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

As I have just noted, the new Agenda clearly articulates the commitment of the African States to promoting their own development. More specifically, however, it expresses their commitment to continuing a programme of reform and improvement of domestic management; to intensifying the process of democratization and respect for human rights; to creating an environment conducive to foreign and domestic investment; to strengthening human resource development efforts; to putting increased emphasis on the environment and population; to pursuing rural development policy goals; and to promoting regional economic cooperation and integration. All of these efforts are important and should be encouraged.

My delegation believes that the international community must give strong assistance to African countries seeking to make progress in these areas, and therefore is pleased that the new Agenda reaffirms the international community's strong commitment to do so. The new Agenda refers to the need to give further support to those African countries undertaking vigorous structural adjustment efforts in their response to debt problems in the context of the international debt strategy. It confirms that the international community has undertaken to pursue its efforts to provide additional resources to Africa to complement domestic efforts and financial resources. Furthermore, it reaffirms the importance of an early and successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round, bearing in mind the importance to many African States of commodity exports.

We all know how arduous the negotiations conducted by the Ad Hoc Committee were. My delegation strongly hopes that the new Agenda they have produced will therefore become an important framework within which to pursue the objectives of the growth and development of the African countries towards

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

the twenty-first century. It is to be hoped that the international community will continue to give special attention and priority to the efforts of the region to achieve sustained development and will act as partners in this critical enterprise.

I should like to reaffirm that Japan intends to continue to extend strong support to Africa, and, as my Government believes in continuing efforts to promote dialogue between African countries and the international community, it has taken the initiative of convening an international conference on African development in 1993.

Finally, on behalf of my delegation, let me express my great appreciation to the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Huslid of Norway, and the other Bureau members, without whose untiring efforts we would not have made such progress. They have our heartfelt gratitude.

Mr. JIN Yongjian (China) (interpretation from Chinese): At the outset, I should like to express my thanks to the Secretary-General for providing us with a comprehensive and detailed report which is without a doubt an important reference document for our discussion today on the critical economic situation in Africa.

Over the past year, the African countries and peoples have made new efforts to revitalize their national economies and especially to strengthen regional economic cooperation and integration. However, as they have been beset with an extremely unfavourable external environment - though some African countries have achieved economic development - the African economic situation as a whole has yet to see a genuine improvement. And a critical economic situation in Africa cannot but cause general concern and anxiety.

(Mr. Jin Yongjian, China)

Not long ago, the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole set up by the General Assembly conducted its final review and appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 and reached initial agreement on a United Nations new Agenda for economic recovery and development in Africa in the 1990s. This, in our view, is an important event in African economic development and a demonstration of the international community's sympathy and concern for African economic recovery and development. We welcome this event.

The key to the success of the new Agenda and the effective realization of its objectives lies in the international community's meeting the requirements of the new Agenda, adopting explicit policies and measures, and making and putting into practice commitments in various fields vital to Africa's development.

I should now like to make a few observations on how to fulfil the commitments in the new Agenda.

First, the critical economic situation in Africa should receive priority attention at the international level. The African economy is a component part of the world economy, and world economic growth will be adversely affected if the economic situation in Africa remains grim.

(Mr. Jin Yongjian, China)

In recent years there have been some changes in the world economic situation. Development resources and assistance are being redirected, and this trend is causing concern to the developing countries, including the African countries. We hold that, however vicissitudinous the world situation may be, the international community should make African economic recovery and development one of the priority items on its agenda. The requests and needs of the African countries should not be overlooked. At the same time efforts should be made to avoid the further marginalization of Africa.

Secondly, it is important that the African countries make their own efforts. In the declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State or Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in Addis Ababa, and in the new Agenda the African countries reiterate that the development of Africa is primarily the responsibility of Africans. In fact, over the years the Africa Governments and peoples have made unswerving efforts to achieve African economic revitalization and development. In the new Agenda the African countries have undertaken to carry out the necessary reforms, to improve domestic economic management, to use domestic resources effectively, to promote regional and subregional economic cooperation and integration, to enhance people's participation in the development process, and to strengthen South-South cooperation. Undoubtedly all of these commitments are of great significance to Africa's development.

Thirdly, the international community should share responsibility, strengthen its cooperation with Africa, and support efforts made by the African countries. With a view to ensuring effective implementation of the new Agenda, the international community should continue its endeavours to have sustained growth in Africa realized. Especially necessary are measures to

(Mr. Jin Yongjian, China)

solve the debt crisis in Africa, to increase the flow of resources to Africa, to see that African products are given improved access to the markets of the developed countries, and to support the African countries in their efforts towards economic diversification and regional integration.

Finally, the United Nations system should play its due part in the implementation of the new Agenda. Various United Nations organizations and specialized agencies, in their respective fields, should devise specific programmes for Africa, consistent with the provisions of the Agenda, and should devote adequate resources to the implementation of those programmes. They should also try to provide satisfactory statistics, supervision and inspection with a view to helping the international community to appraise implementation effectively.

As a developing country, China has always sympathized with the African peoples in their difficult situation. Although China does not yet enjoy prosperity, we have done our best to assist Africa by way of economic and technical cooperation, and we have achieved fairly satisfactory results. As always, the Chinese Government will strengthen its friendly cooperation in various fields with the African countries and carry out its own endeavours for African economic and social development.

Mr. SAMUELSSON (Sweden): I have the honour of making this statement on behalf of the five Nordic countries - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

The call for democracy and participation is sweeping the African continent. Just recently we witnessed the first election in Zambia in 20 years. This is but one of many illustrations of the breakthrough towards

(Mr. Samuelsson, Sweden)

democracy in Africa, signalling not only a new political start for Africa but also a new impetus for economic reform and resumed development.

The Secretary-General's report on the economic situation in Africa and his review and appraisal of the Programme of Action depict a continent plagued by economic setbacks, dwindling investment flows, drought, disease and famine. Sadly, it is true that Africa is suffering these things. However, I do not wish to dwell on failures and disappointments. Nor is it my intention to apportion blame for what went wrong. Many of us have fallen short of targets and verified needs. Recriminations will get us nowhere, but lessons learnt from experience can help us to move forward. We should regard the plight of the continent as a challenge and should look forward. There are signs that, politically and economically, parts of Africa have come to a turning-point.

The tide may be turning, but poverty is still at the heart of the matter - poverty in its economic sense, its environmental sense and its educational sense. The single word "poverty" sums up all the anguish and the aspirations of contemporary Africa. If Africa breaks out of the vicious circle of poverty it will have broken the back of the economic crisis and removed many of the threats presented by problems of environment and population. It is clear, of course, that population policies are needed. This is why the Nordic countries are preoccupied with the interrelated issues of economic growth and human development. Today there is growing consensus regarding the political and economic importance of investment in human resources. People are the goal, as well as the creators, of development. In this context, we want to call special attention to the role of African women in the development of their societies.

(Mr. Samuelsson, Sweden)

Aid is not in itself a solution to development problems. Sometimes it is an indispensable lubricant or facilitator, but it can never be the engine of development and growth.

Some assistance is in the form of disaster relief, and it is clear that such aid is needed. The role of the United Nations in disaster relief is crucial. Ongoing efforts to strengthen this role should therefore be promoted and facilitated. But we should bear in mind the fact that disaster relief cannot take the place of long-term development efforts. There is a link between disaster relief and long-term development cooperation - they are at different points on a continuum - and disaster relief should be planned and monitored with this in mind. It should move gradually along the continuum and become more normal assistance in the field of education, health care and agriculture, enabling the recipients to lead normal and productive lives.

Development is brought about by trade, more than by aid; by investment, not by disinvestment; by open markets, not by constraints and debts. Today Africa needs an environment more conducive to growth. Africa's partners can influence the external factors, and should do so to the best of their aility. As decisions affecting Africa are taken in many different forums, there is a need for concerted efforts outside the continent. A coherent policy in various bodies is thus required if growth and development on the African continent are to be promoted. The Nordic countries are prepared to work in this direction.

The heavy debt burden on many African countries requires special solutions. The Nordic countries therefore strongly urge all members of the Paris Club to contribute actively to securing early agreement on the provision of additional debt relief for the poorest countries. In this regard, we

(Mr. Samuelsson, Sweden)

advocate debt relief - on a case-by-case basis - of up to 80 per cent for the poorest countries most affected, provided that they are committed to adjustment and structural reform.

(Mr. Samuelsson, Sweden)

Although we do not see aid as a universal panacea, we nevertheless recognize that, properly designed, it is an important agent for change in the present circumstances. Unfortunately, little capital is otherwise available to most African countries. Here too, the Nordic countries are prepared to continue their efforts. Our aid to Africa is considerable. It has grown to about two thirds of our total spending on bilateral programmes. As a group, the Nordic countries are among those that have achieved the 0.7 per cent target for development cooperation, and some of us have surpassed this target considerably.

Our aid is long-term and has traditionally been sensitive to our partners in development. We intend to keep it that way. Let me assure our African friends that our commitment to Africa remains firm, even with the new needs surfacing in Europe.

External resources to Africa are not restricted to government-to-government aid. Multilateral institutions, in particular the development banks, the private sector and non-governmental organizations, are vitally important. But actors must be clear about their different and complementary roles. What we are talking about is teamwork.

The Governments of Africa are responsible for the well-being of all their citizens as well as for the economic development of their countries. Political decisions and their consequences for the future rest squarely with the leadership of each country. External assistance is of limited value without corresponding changes on the domestic African scene.

The majority of African countries facing an economic crisis are engaged in structural adjustment programmes. While these programmes can be painful, they are necessary for the attainment of sustainable development.

(Mr. Samuelsson, Sweden)

Strengthened efforts must be made to liberalize economies, to open the way to free trade, to remove general subsidies that are not expressly focused on the poorest parts of the population and to encourage the development of a thriving private sector.

The adjustment efforts of African countries deserve our support. Our role is to ensure that structural adjustment programmes receive adequate financing so that the reform process can be continued and reinforced. A prime vehicle for supporting African countries undertaking adjustment is the World Bank Special Programme of Assistance. This Programme, to which all Nordic countries actively contribute, continues to be a successful partnership providing quickly disbursed assistance to the poorest, most debt-ridden countries undertaking adjustment programmes. Partly as a result of this Programme, the resource flow to these countries has actually increased over the last three years.

In most of Africa, trade and investments are impeded by a plethora of red tape and bureaucratic fences. In our opinion much still remains to be done to make possible a free flow of goods both within Africa and to and from the continent. In order for external trade to take place, there is an urgent need for improved access to developed countries' markets. The Nordic countries urge all participants to make genuine efforts to bring the Uruguay Round to a successful conclusion.

Domestic production in Africa has not had much chance to develop. Efforts should be made in sub-Saharan Africa to raise family-sector farming from the subsistence level to production for a free market. Domestic economic policies should be much more centred on the needs of the rural majority of the

(Mr. Samuelsson, Sweden)

population. Previous tendencies to favour the urban sector through pricing and exchange rates should be reversed, as is being done in many African countries today.

But for the inhabitants of any country, other requirements, besides material ones, must be met. The 1990s promise to go down in history as the decade of democracy. The Nordic countries appreciate the fact that democracy cannot be imposed from above or from outside. It must grow from below and within. Its roots are in the realities facing the ordinary citizen in everyday life. Courageous steps have already been taken in many parts of Africa to push forward the frontiers of democracy and to safeguard human rights. It is important to continue this process. The Nordic countries are prepared to assist through aid to democratic institutions such as the electoral process, independent media, including journalism, and an impartial judiciary.

We realize, however, that democracy has many facets. It is a state of mind but also represents a moral obligation. More than anything else it is a process, a deepening of values in society. As such it should be a constant preoccupation and cannot be reduced to a simple static question of formal criteria. However, democracy does incorporate genuine pluralism and participation. In this common endeavour we can and should share experiences.

Good governance implies a responsibility for how budgetary means are allocated. Many countries today have defence budgets that are out of step with present-day security needs. The world average for military spending is 4.5 per cent of gross national product. Estimates indicate that an overall reduction to this average, combined with a 20 per cent cut by industrialized countries, would release funds totaling more than twice the amount of

(Mr. Samuelsson, Sweden)

world-wide aid. It is up to us, as donors, to draw the obvious conclusions. We can turn some of our swords into ploughshares for use in Africa and elsewhere; we can rethink our role in arms exports. Even relatively modest cuts would release substantial sums for use in Africa, in social sectors for example.

We also wish to stress that good governance includes the struggle against corruption - in all societies. Corruption undermines democracy, distorts economies and diverts scarce resources from development purposes. It is a cancer in the body politic. Let us combine our efforts to combat it.

Africa possesses strong and viable grass-roots organizations. In the wake of pluralism they can spur Governments to pursue development for the people. I wish particularly to underscore the importance of such non-governmental organizations through their dedicated and long-term work. The Nordic governments welcome the increased recognition of the non-governmental organizations' role in fostering broad-based development.

Education should play a central role in the development of Africa. It is among the key solutions to problems ranging from environmental threats, to population issues, to health hazards, including AIDS, all of which should be forcefully confronted. Within the realm of education we wish to point to the education of girls and women as being of particular significance in the light of the various challenges I have just identified.

All these elements of action, external and domestic, are steps that we must take together.

(Mr. Samuelsson, Sweden)

The final review and evaluation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development offered the latest opportunity for renewing the commitment of the international community to support Africa's own efforts to achieve self-sustaining socio-economic growth and development. Though the programme did not quite become a focal point for economic policy or resource mobilization, it pointed out that the reasons which had led to its adoption in 1986 were still valid. It is therefore of crucial importance that the United Nations new Agenda for the development of Africa in the 1990s show results.

A number of other forums and groupings to promote these changes have come into being to match the necessary efforts of the United Nations. Some of them deserve special mention. The Global Coalition for Africa, a joint effort between developing and developed countries, supported by international organizations, has entered into operation. At its summit meeting in June 1991, the Organization of African Unity placed greater emphasis than it had previously done on the cause of human rights and pluralism in Africa. The organization has since received proposals from the Kampala summit of the African Leadership Forum on a process to move towards higher standards of security, stability, development and cooperation among African nations. Regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Coordination Conference are evaluating their scope and roles in order to provide valuable building blocks for the improvement of African cooperation and the conditions for development. All these efforts provide the United Nations with mutually supportive activities.

Although couched in more specific terms, the item on our agenda today is the North-South issue. The lesson of history, not least of contemporary

(Mr. Samuelsson, Sweden)

history, is that there are implications for all of us if some of our fellow human beings are subjected to suffering, oppression or deprivation.

There are strong, universally shared ethical values at stake here, not only economic realities. Any social order permanently based on power and riches only for the few is doomed. That is the basic argument both for North-South collaboration and for reforms in Africa itself. Therein, too, lies the urgency of the situation. Our threefold challenge is economic, political and ethical. The North-South gap is one of the most pressing and explosive unresolved issues of our time. We either bridge it together or we are all engulfed by it.

I wish to conclude by saying that this points out the crucial importance of the United Nations as the unique platform for political debate between equals. There is no other forum, however important and effective, that can replace the United Nations in this regard. Therefore, we should actively seek to complement initiatives taken in other quarters by discussing United Nations reports such as the one now before us and by exchanging views on what must be done. But that is not enough. Our deliberations here must be followed up by action by all of us in the various executing bodies, bilateral and others, that are responsible for concrete action. Tomorrow is our shared responsibility.

Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile) (interpretation from Spanish): Allow me to congratulate both of us, Sir, on the happy coincidence that you, a friend from my own region, are presiding over our discussions at this moment.

I should like at the outset of this statement to express my gratitude to Ambassador Huslid for the great work he is doing on this item and for the clear direction he provided in his introductory statement today. I also

(Mr. Somavia, Chile)

congratulate the members of the Bureau with whom he has worked so closely; some of them are present in this Hall.

It is with great interest and in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation that we are taking part in this debate on the situation of Africa. Because of its capable people, its vast territory, its abundant and diverse natural resources, its history and its ancient cultures, we believe in Africa's future and Africa's destiny.

The value of those components bestows on Africa growing importance, both today and potentially tomorrow, on the world stage. In Africa, important political, social and economic events are taking place, and we cannot look on in indifference when these events demand a commitment from the international community to face the great dimensions of the crisis that can be seen in certain aspects.

In general, the African countries are carrying out a very significant process of political change and economic adjustment whose objective is to improve the living conditions of a population 52 per cent of which subsists in abject poverty. The magnitude of that poverty affects each and every one of us. We in Chile believe in the principle that the haves must accept their responsibility towards the have-nots. That is the way it should be both domestically and internationally.

The growing process of transformation in African political institutions is giving rise to a greater degree of participation on the part of the peoples in deciding their own destiny. Freedom and openness are growing despite very negative economic and social indicators. We cannot fail to notice this.

At the same time, an economic adjustment process is being carried out to palliate a situation distinguished by a 20 per cent decline in per capita

(Mr. Somavia, Chile)

domestic product from 1980 to 1987. Africa's external debt grew to $280 billion, which amounts to more than 100 per cent of its gross domestic product and more than 350 per cent of its total exports.

The concrete, tangible result of this situation is the deterioration of infrastructures, the destruction of means of communication, growing unemployment and worsening health. All this means that millions of human beings are living in conditions that make it practically impossible for them to satisfy their most basic needs. We cannot fail to notice this either.

(Mr. Somavia, Chile)

The reasons for that situation are well documented and combine in terms of their devastating effects both internal and external factors that include economic policies which were not always appropriate, constant drought, the instability of the world economy and the weakness of development assistance. There is a clear consensus that the possibilities for long-term growth in Africa are inevitably determined by the world economic situation.

The combination of these factors led our Organization to adopt the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, which we are to evaluate this year.

The report of the Secretary-General is crystal-clear with respect to the results of the Programme of Action. It is necessary to draw attention to two of its aspects which probably sum up the situation as a whole.

On the one hand, the African countries have effectively begun working to generate their own resources for financing the Programme's priorities, but they have not attained their goal because of depressed prices in the world market. During the period covered by the Programme of Action, the export earnings of African countries declined by more than $50 billion, while during the same period the net resource flows to African countries not only did not attain the desired targets but fell by more than a billion dollars between 1986 and 1990.

> In such a clear-cut situation, the Secretary-General concludes that: "Africa's debt and commodity problems were not dealt with adequately, resulting in Africa becoming more indebted by the end of the Programme than at its inception, and earning a much diminished income from an increased volume of commodity exports." (A/46/324, para. 19)

(Mr. Somavia, Chile)

Therefore we agree with the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development.

At the same time, it must be reiterated that economic adjustment processes in regions of incipient industrialization require a great deal more time to produce benefits. Thus, Africa is unquestionably facing an emergency, but it is also experiencing a process of growing economic transition in which the support requirements are different from those designed exclusively for emergency situations. Consideration should again be given to the social dimensions of adjustment in Africa, so that the adjustment can be carried out with due regard for the effect of policies on the most vulnerable groups.

The international community is, in our opinion, under obligation to assist the African countries in their effort to carry out a policy of economic growth with social justice that directly links national macroeconomic strategy to the capacity and opportunities of each individual household.

All this requires a clear understanding of the effects of adjustment on the poorest segments of the population. The processes to which the African countries have committed themselves show that the authorities understand these effects, but their efforts are limited by the conditions of the international economy. Therefore it is necessary to agree on a set of future guidelines characterized basically by a set of clear counterpart commitments on the part of the international community for structural adjustment in conditions of social equity, an adjustment that the African countries are carrying out with a tenacity commensurate only with the magnitude of the problems to be solved.

In particular, we feel that priority treatment should be given to the situation of the 42 relatively least-developed countries in such areas as the

(Mr. Somavia, Chile)

cancellation of official bilateral debt and the reduction of the amounts owed to international financial institutions.

From the standpoint of trade, particularly in the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), guarantees should be given to the African countries in connection with a set of concessions on access to markets, including safeguards, in order to expand their trading opportunities. There should also be guaranteed financing of medium-term and long-term African development as a form of support for the reform process and encouragement in the national private sector.

From the point of view of assistance, Africa should be the continent where aid is concentrated, so as to complement the efforts of each country in the growth processes directed basically towards the reduction and elimination of poverty as the fundamental objective of economic policies.

Another objective that has not been overlooked by African authorities is the incorporation of social indicators into the analysis of macroeconomic policies as a means of attaining in the medium and long term the goals set by those policies. The same perspective should be adopted by the international community in approaching the complex problem of Africa's social and economic situation. Otherwise there would be a serious risk of having important political changes undermined by grave social instability.

In other United Nations forums, Chile has contended that there can be no security in the North without security in the South, and here today we can unhesitatingly say that there can be no security in the world without security in Africa. The history of Africa will make a decisive contribution to the task of contemporary history.

(Mr. Somavia, Chile)

In this general context, Chile wishes - although it may not be an appropriate subject in this debate - to state its complete support for the aspiration of the African continent that the next Secretary-General of the United Nations should come from that region. Such a choice would be symbolic. It is a legitimate aspiration, for which the African continent has many distinguished candidates.

Chile has not come here as a donor country. I cannot from this rostrum show any figures concerning cooperation with African development programmes. I am here for other reasons. I am here because of solidarity and because of Chile's political conviction, as a Latin American country, that our two regions should pay attention to each other and express sensitivity for our reciprocal problems. We shall do everything possible to support and promote the solution of African problems here in the United Nations and in the bilateral relationship between our two regions.

But as we all know, the primary responsibility for our own future lies with ourselves. Accordingly, I wish to conclude by quoting a well-known African historian of the fifteenth century who declared in his work "The Prolegomena" that great peoples suffer reverses from which they emerge thanks to their own greatness. I have no doubt that Africa's greatness will measure up to its challenges.

Mr. WILENSKI (Australia): Africa's continuing economic plight is a source of deep concern and regret to Australia. It remains one of the biggest challenges facing the international community in the decade ahead.

Since the launching in 1986 of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, living standards in Africa have continued to deteriorate. Because of external and internal factors, the aggregate economic performance recorded under the Programme of Action was highly unsatisfactory. Gross domestic product fell by an average of 0.7 per cent per year and was lower at the end of the Programme than at the beginning. Gross domestic savings stagnated and gross domestic investment, as a percentage of the gross domestic product, remained at low levels - indeed declined. But it also needs to be recognized that, due largely to the ceaseless efforts of the African Governments and peoples since the launching of the Programme of Action, some successes were registered, and the hardships faced would have been far worse without the Programme.

The international community and individual African nations must now look to what needs to be done in the coming decade to put Africa firmly on the path to sustained growth and development. This will be dependent on a number of factors, including growth in agricultural productivity and food security, human resource development, alleviation of the debt burden and continued emphasis on improvements in the domestic policy environment. In particular, an improvement of Africa's trade competitiveness is vital to its economic development. Africa is more dependent on export commodities than any other region and the success of its commodity sector is of paramount importance to its economic growth.

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

Australia recognizes the role the international community can play in removing barriers to African exports. These barriers are significant and constitute a major disincentive to economic reform and diversification. In this context, trade liberalization, including a satisfactory conclusion of the Uruguay Round, is vitally important to African development. The international community can most assist the development process in Africa by working towards an international trade and economic environment which is financially stable and conducive to sustained growth in output and trade. From Australia's perspective, this is the most effective way industrialized countries, and particularly Australia, can assist African developing countries to increase their export revenues and to address their growing poverty and declining gross domestic product, which are exacerbated by growing indebtedness.

While there is still much more that the international community can and should do to promote African economic recovery and development, ultimately the countries concerned are primarily responsible for setting and implementing appropriate economic policies, including those relating to structural adjustment and the encouragement of foreign and domestic direct assistance. We welcome the balanced recognition of these points in the report of the Review Conference of the Programme of Action.

It is testimony to the improving atmosphere in relation to the discussion of debt issues that the resolution on debt recently negotiated at the session of the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development gave particular emphasis to sound national policies and an open multilateral trading system. Similarly, at the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Bangkok in mid-October there was clear recognition of the roles of developed and developing countries

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

alike in removing constraints on development. There was also recognition of the link between trade and development and of the urgent need for an early and successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round to reduce barriers to trade and to establish a stable and predictable trading environment.

Australia is concerned about the heavy debt levels in many developing countries and is keenly aware of the human cost that such indebtedness can impose. Australia supports efforts to alleviate debt problems in the highly indebted sub-Saharan African countries. A great deal more needs to be achieved from those efforts, but the direction of change is clearly established.

Australia is committed to helping to restore and improve African economic performance and growth. We are making every effort to improve the international environment, to assist developing countries to overcome the problem of debt, and to facilitate the difficult process of structural adjustment. We have encouraged industrialized countries to take every opportunity to strengthen the multilateral trading system and to allow developing countries greater access to international markets.

As well as working vigourously for a favourable economic environment, Australia has also been a strong contributor to Africa's development efforts through our development assistance programme. And our concern to see a strong Africa manifests itself in other ways, for example in our continuing interest in the progress of humanitarian and human rights issues, and in our working actively to dismantle apartheid in South Africa and prepare now for equitable growth and development in post-apartheid southern Africa.

As a global community, we need to continue to build on the effective work which is already being done and on the levels of agreement which have been

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

established in addressing the critical needs of Africa. Australia will continue to support the efforts of the African Governments and peoples in the difficult challenges which lie ahead.

Mr. JANKOWITSCH (Austria): As I am speaking in the General Assembly for the first time, I extend to Mr. Shihabi and the other members of the Bureau my best wishes for the full success of their important mission.

As our debate unfolds this morning, Africa - as a continent and a political entity - seems to have more or less disappeared from the headlines of the international mass media. Even reports on drought catastrophes and political unrest seem to attract very little attention indeed and to have become mostly routine. Thus, the dramatic decline in the economic and social situation of Africa, with all its devastating social, political and cultural consequences, stands in stark contrast to what we must perceive as declining public and political interest in the fate of that important continent.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations clearly stated in his report on the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development that its outcome had indeed been unsatisfactory. According to the Secretary-General, the main reason for this was an unfavourable external environment, which was reflected in the much-reduced export prices and earnings while the prices of imports continued to increase.

(Mr. Jankowitsch, Austria)

While the purchasing power of exports in other parts of the developing world - Latin America and Asia - improved slightly in the last decade, it decreased by more than 40 per cent in Africa. The terms of trade deteriorated in Africa more than in other parts of the third world. For the period of the Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, they reached only 64 per cent, compared to 1980, which was mostly due to the decline in commodity prices. From 1986 to 1990, the per capita income decreased 0.7 per cent per year, because the economic growth of approximately 2.3 per cent per year could not keep up with the population growth of more than 3 per cent per year. While the population growth rate has continually decreased in Latin America since the 1960s, and in Asia since the 1970s, it has continued to increase in Africa and reached 3.2 per cent in 1990.

The foreign debt burden of African countries more than doubled in the last decade, and as far as the sub-Saharan region is concerned, even tripled. Today, it amounts to 109 per cent of the total African gross national product. During the last five years alone the African States spent an average of more than 30 per cent of their export earnings for the settlement of foreign debts. As 70 per cent of the African foreign debt is owed to public creditors, should it not be possible to work out a solution, provided that there is the political will of the governing bodies of international financial institutions and of the Governments of the creditor countries? In my opinion, however, even debt conversion would not be sufficient; rather, it would probably be necessary to work out a programme for substantial debt reduction, or even total debt cancellation.

Deterioration in the terms of trade and purchasing power, increased foreign debt and decreased real capital flows have thus drawn Africa into

(Mr. Jankowitsch, Austria)

a vicious circle. In such an unfavourable economic environment, all efforts to achieve structural adjustment will inevitably lead to further deterioration of the social situation of the population.

During the 1980s, the average wage in Africa dropped by 30 per cent - even 50 per cent in the public sector; unemployment registered a yearly increase of 10 per cent between 1986 and 1990; in 1985, 25 per cent of all children under six years of age suffered from acute protein deficiencies and in 1989, this figure had already reached 40 per cent - and this is an incomplete list.

It is a fact, therefore, that the African continent is the scene of a drama of mankind, the dimensions of which, I am afraid, have not been fully understood by the rest of the world. Further it is a fact that the measures and programmes undertaken until now are obviously insufficient to fight this catastrophe successfully; on the contrary, we feel the situation is worsening day by day.

Desertification, drought catastrophes, and other natural disasters, together with political unrest and civil war, intensify the critical economic and social situation of the continent. I think we can therefore all agree with the Secretary-General when he says that the international community must substantially increase its support for Africa's efforts to revive its economies, or the continent will sink deeper into an unrelenting crisis of tragic proportions; overcoming this crisis represents the greatest development challenge of our time.

This development challenge is a double one - one for the Governments of the African countries themselves and one for the Governments of the rest of the members of the international community. The crisis can be overcome neither solely from our side nor solely from within Africa.

(Mr. Jankowitsch, Austria)

As far as the African contributions are concerned, let me start by pointing to the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation, a Charter whose actual implementation could play an important role in the development of the continent. The needs and interests of all segments of the population can only be served, according to the Charter, if broad participation in the development process is guaranteed - or, as was so ably expressed in a recent document of a Western European Government, development for the people, by the people, through the people. Moreover, participation can also serve as an economic incentive, thus mobilizing the creative abilities and productivity of the people. Let me in this context also commend many of the proposals contained in the report of the South Commission.

Democracy and respect for human rights are not only the basis for such participation but also the fundamental basis for sustainable development. Many countries today are undergoing important changes in this respect - as was repeatedly pointed out in the debate this morning. These changes find their expression in multipartism and the elections we have witnessed recently - indeed, over the past weeks. There is general agreement today that the new democracies in Eastern and Central Europe need our assistance in periods of transition. But this must also hold true with regard to the wave of democratization in Africa.

While, as I just underlined, democracy is an indispensable prerequisite for development, this also holds true for peace. We therefore welcome the fact that the United Nations new Agenda for the Development of Africa takes this aspect fully into account.

(Mr. Jankowitsch, Austria)

It is our hope that the end of the cold war will facilitate the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts and allow for the redirection of resources from military expenditures to productive ends. There must also be a peace dividend for Africa. The process of overcoming apartheid in South Africa will further reduce the need for armaments. I therefore think that the time has come to intensify efforts, either within the Organization of African Unity (OAU) or at other regional levels, to create regional security systems based on disarmament and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Naturally, such a process must be supported by a global system of arms control and a general reduction in arms transactions. I am convinced that public opinion in the industrialized countries could be increasingly motivated to recognize the need for development cooperation if resources wasted on armaments expenditures could be reduced.

Allow me to add a few more brief comments on items which, owing to time constraints, it is not possible to go into at length. These also relate to African contributions that require, however, adequate support by the international community. One of these is the reorientation of economic policies, as the price decline of African commodities clearly demonstrates that a purely export-oriented economy does not really help to achieve the desired aims. Therefore, efforts have to be made to diversify the economies and to concentrate more on the needs of their own populations. The focal point in this regard should be increased agricultural production. Another important factor would be the examination of the social, cultural and environmental impacts of economic adjustment programmes. Last but not least, African Governments will have to concentrate seriously on population policies. We have to realize that a population growth rate of 3 per cent per year - with a tendency towards continued growth - is unsustainable.

(Mr. Jankowitsch, Austria)

By stating these aspirations respectfully to the Governments of Africa, I by no means want to shift any responsibilities away from the Governments of the international community - and especially not from those of the Western industrialized countries or from the governing bodies of the multilateral organizations. There is no doubt that it is the North which is responsible for the unfavourable economic environment mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report. If between 1986 and 1990 - to quote the last figure - Africa lost approximately $50 billion solely due to a decline in commodity prices, it is an unsatisfactory answer to refer only to the play of market forces. The international community has an obligation to intervene by strengthening the various commodity agreements and refilling commodity stocks.

Clearly, the challenge of the critical economic situation in Africa continues to be tremendous. But we also notice the emergence of a new and shared understanding of development and are heartened by it.

We welcome the recognition by most African countries that revised economic reforms and good governance are a key to economic development. We share the view that recovery and renewed development will take longer to achieve than was hoped and projected in 1986 by Africa, as well as by donor States and international financial institutions.

(Mr. Jankowitsch, Austria)

It is now widely accepted that without positive real per capita growth sustained structural adjustment is very difficult, and that priority should be given to human resources development, infrastructure and the eradication of poverty.

The Ad Hoc Committee conducted the final review and appraisal of the Programme of Action at a moment in history when the global economic situation was very different - and probably less favourable for Africa's needs - from what it was when the Programme was adopted in 1986. According to projections for the 1990s by the International Monetary Fund, unless appropriate measures are taken by both the developing and the developed countries, the world is likely to generate lower savings rates than in the 1980s. At the same time, Eastern and Central European countries will demand - and are indeed already receiving - a larger share of the savings of the Western industrialized world. Moreover, they have by and large ceased to be net suppliers of resources to the developing countries. The restructuring needs of the Gulf countries will also make a significant demand on global savings. Latin American and Asian countries may too be in need of greater resource inflows. These factors combine to deflect attention and resources from Africa, and we must take action to reverse that state of affairs.

In view of this general economic situation, it is all the more important for the United Nations to give the critical economic situation in Africa all the attention it deserves. There can be no uncoupling of the economic fate of Africa from that of the rest of the world. The international community at large has a responsibility towards Africa. Austria fully endorses the principle of shared responsibility and full partnership of the international

(Mr. Jankowitsch, Austria)

community vis-à-vis Africa. This shared responsibility and partnership is best expressed by providing tangible support to African development efforts.

Let me now turn briefly to Austria's specific development cooperation with Africa. We focus special attention on grass-roots and human resources development, which in our opinion is an essential precondition not only for the consolidation of peace, but also for the establishment of democratic structures. The eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable economic growth and social progress are thus the principal objectives of Austria's development cooperation with Africa. Most of our target countries are least developed countries, the majority of them being situated in Africa. Senegal, Cape Verde, Burkina Faso and Ghana, as well as the east-central sub-Saharan and southern African States - to mention but a few - are the main partners of the Austro-African development cooperation effort. Particular attention is being paid in many of these countries to vocational training, a field in which Austrian cooperation has developed outstanding methodologies. An extended sectoral programme for the rehabilitation of transport infrastructures is being implemented in the region of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, in close cooperation with the World Bank, the European Community and other donors.

In addition to the core programmes in the main target areas, my Government supports projects being implemented by non-governmental organizations, particularly in the fields of education, basic health, rural development and employment strategies in most countries south of the Sahara. This year, development cooperation financed from our federal budget is likely to increase in the amount of 0.3 per cent of Austria's gross national product. Austria stands ready to join the efforts of other donor States and

(Mr. Jankowitsch, Austria)

institutions to alleviate the plight of the African people. Food security, the establishment or rehabilitation of basic structures in health care, education and other public services seem to be the most urgent priorities.

In conclusion, I should like to stress clearly that the dramatic situation in Africa deserves much more attention from the public and from international politics. It is crucially important at this moment not to succumb to what the French Minister for Cooperation and Development, Mrs. Edwige Avice, called "Afro-pessimism". Concrete and speedy steps have to be taken, especially towards debt relief, increased flows of resources, improvement of export prices and earnings and diversification of economies. In Africa today the survival of hundreds of millions of people is at stake. I am deeply convinced that, in the end, at issue is the political will to find a solution, rather than the availability of resources for doing so, not only in the interest of the people and nations of Africa, but also of mankind as a whole and of general global progress.*

Mr. Syed Mukhtar HUSSAIN (Pakistan): The Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development met in September this year against the backdrop of the reality that the Programme's results had not fulfilled the expectations of the African people. The grave problems that had prompted the initiative to be taken in 1986 have remained unanswered, as demonstrated by a predominantly negative overall

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* The President returned to the Chair.

(Mr. Syed Mukhtar Hussain, Pakistan)

social and economic performance. The meeting provided an important forum for the purpose of taking stock of the progress made during the four years of the Programme's existence and of reviewing the status of the compact of mutual commitments and cooperation between the African nations and the international community. The meeting was also intended to formulate a framework of international cooperation for the 1990s to assist the African countries in their sincere struggle to ensure Africa's integration in the world economy, thus ensuring a better future for the people of that great continent.

The Secretary-General's report on the critical economic situation in Africa underscores the sad reality that the situation in Africa is as precarious today as it was prior to the adoption of the Programme of Action. The report of the North-South Roundtable session on the challenge of Africa in the 1990s held in Canada earlier this year points out that Africa as a continent has become increasingly marginalized. Its share in the world economy had fallen to under 2 per cent by 1985; its terms of trade have fallen by 40 per cent since 1980, while its indebtedness to the rest of the world has risen to around $280 billion. Real net resource flows to the continent actually fell from $24.6 billion in 1986 to $23.3 billion in 1989. Official development assistance has also remained static at around $16 billion per year. This situation has been worsened by a net transfer of financial resources from Africa to the International Monetary Fund.

(Mr. Syed Mukhtar Hussain, Pakistan)

The high expectations of the African countries at the time of the launching of the Programme of Action in 1986 have been replaced by a general mood of discouragement and disappointment in 1991. The Secretary General's report points out that human conditions in Africa worsened considerably during the Programme period. Statistics show that Africa is confronted by the problems of having at least 27 million people starving, of a substantial brain drain of qualified people, and of living standards falling by a quarter. Widespread poverty has arisen while incomes per head in sub-Saharan Africa have fallen by 20 per cent over the last decade. According to World Bank projections, Africa is the one continent in which the number of poor is still projected to increase over the next decade, by an additional 85 million by the year 2000, in a period when the number of poor elsewhere in the developing world is anticipated to fall by 385 million.

Africa showed great seriousness about keeping its part of the bargain envisaged under the Programme of Action, and most African countries pursued policies of reform and structural adjustment designed to improve their economic performance and to pave the way for sustained growth and development. The observation contained in the mid-term review of the Programme in 1988 - that despite earnest efforts to carry out structural adjustments in their national economic policies, most African countries had found little respite from the harsh climatic conditions and an unfavourable external economic environment - remains valid even today. Africa's sincere commitment to the Programme of Action is reflected in the reform measures instituted in economic management, exchange rates, public enterprises, population planning and the agricultural sector, despite their often high

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political, social and economic costs and sacrifices. The people of Africa have borne these sacrifices with courage and dignity. They rightly expect that their personal impoverishment should now end, and that genuine international economic cooperation should lead to national revitalization and recovery. The adverse effects of domestic and external resource constraints on African productivity have outweighed the positive impact of policy reforms. On the other hand, the international community did not prove to be forthcoming in keeping its part of the compact. The $9 billion a year for the four years of the Programme of Action expected from the international community never came.

The September meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole reaffirmed the fundamental principle that any positive change and recovery in the African economic crisis requires both national and international support. Therefore, while stressing that Africa's development is primarily the responsibility of Africans, a commitment was made by the international community to give full and tangible support to African efforts in this sphere. The new Agenda for the 1990's, adopted by the Ad Hoc Committee, defines the role and responsibilities of the African countries on the one hand and the international community on the other. It is clear that African nations cannot succeed without external financial assistance and strengthened international efforts to create a global economic climate conducive to African efforts. The new Agenda emphasizes that the priority objectives of the African countries are the accelerated transformation, integration, diversification and growth of African economies in order to integrate them in the world economy, reduce their vulnerability to external shocks, increase their dynamism, internalize

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the process of development and enhance their self-reliance. The review of the Programme of Action provided an opportunity to elicit a reinforcement of commitments by the major donors and multilateral institutions - commitments backed by firm assurances of concrete action. Such concrete action is the only hope of stemming the tide of economic distress and dislocation currently sweeping the African continent. Reform of the international economic and financial system is vital to Africa's recovery. Moreover, an overall improvement in the international economic environment will revitalize growth and development throughout the developing world. The opportunities for horizontal cooperation thus created would immeasurably reinforce Africa's efforts to set its economy on the path of sustained development.

It is therefore imperative to fulfil the commitments made by the international community for solving the African debt problem, the flow of additional resources to Africa, the grant of improved market access to Africa's exports through substantial reduction in or removal of trade barriers, the provision of additional resources to support Africa's diversification programmes, and support for regional economic integration. The undertakings given by the international community were the result of intense negotiations and proved the sincerity of the developed countries' efforts to play a major part in lifting the African countries out of their web of problems, which are aggravated by a negative international environment. The early implementation of the new Agenda is essential to ensure that, unlike the 1980s, which has been described as a lost decade for development in Africa, the 1990s can bring about some change for the courageous people of that continent. In an interdependent world economy, another decade lost to

(Mr. Syed Mukhtar Hussain, Pakistan)

development is bound to affect several generations to come, not only in Africa but also in other regions.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that the report of the Ad Hoc Committee prepared under the chairmanship of Ambassador Huslid of Norway is endorsed in this plenary session by acclamation.

Mr. SILOVIC (Yugoslavia): On behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and of Yugoslavia, allow me to make some comments on the critical economic situation in Africa and in particular on the final review and appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development.

(Mr. Silovic, Yugoslavia)

Five years ago, this body adopted the Programme of Action in an effort to find solutions to the alarming economic situation besetting the African continent, which is one of the most serious problems on the economic and social agenda of the United Nations. We are gathered here again, confronted with the realization that the aspirations and goals of the Programme of Action fell short of expectations and that the critical economic problems of African countries have persisted and in certain aspects have become more serious. The challenges and tasks in confronting them are greater and more complex.

In this context, we indeed view the final review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action as an opportunity to renew the commitment of the international community to supporting Africa's efforts in helping itself and in maintaining the problems of the continent at the focus of international attention.

As is clearly stated in the annex to the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Recovery and Development 1986-1990, the Programme of Action for Africa did not become a focal point for economic policy or for resource mobilization on behalf of Africa. It is with a sense of great disappointment and frustration that we have to admit that multilateral action, in spite of progress in some fields, has not led to a reversal of the economic misfortunes and malaise of Africa.

However, the sombre statistics speak for themselves. Notwithstanding the significant efforts that were invested by many African countries in implementing stringent and austere structural adjustment programmes and the fact that the growth of output in the majority of African countries had, at

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the end of the Programme in 1988 and 1989, begun to exceed population growth, the inescapable conclusion remains that the overall economic situation and the standard of living of the vast majority of the African people has not improved.

Targets for growth, food security, human investment and debt reduction were not achieved. This has in turn had a devastating effect on the social infrastructure in Africa and has resulted in a deterioration in health, education and culture. Africa's dependence on its few commodities for its export income, the declining terms of trade for commodities, and the mounting debt burden have created a vicious circle from which it has become very difficult for Africa to extricate itself. Inevitably, problems of poverty have brought about environmental degradation and have facilitated natural disasters.

The debt crisis has, in the case of the majority of African countries, been a crippling impediment to growth and development, and indebtedness now stands at an unmanageable $270 billion. The debt-service-to-exports ratio is above the critical level of 25 per cent and, in the case of some African countries, it is over 100 per cent. It is of particular concern that the increased resources that the international community, in 1986, agreed were needed to ensure the success of African efforts did not materialize.

Admittedly, some donors substantially increased their support for the continent but, as is stated in the Secretary-General's report (A/46/234 and Add.1), overall real net resource flows to the continent actually fell from $24.6 billion in 1986 to $23.3 billion in 1990. There are many aspects to the causes that have contributed to this bleak picture, and they have both external and internal origins. There is no denying the fact that the external economic environment has not been conducive to economic growth and development

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of the continent and has, to the contrary, rather added to the economic hardships through falling commodity prices, inadequate inflows of financial resources and crippling debt servicing.

African countries undertook enormous efforts in implementing the Programme of Action. We cannot but commend those outstanding endeavours, particularly since these measures caused great social and political difficulties in many countries. The reform process was, in many ways, the result of a realization of the intrinsic responsibility of the African countries for their own development. In many instances, it was coupled with significant breakthroughs in the process of democratization and the enhancement of the full participation of the people in the development process. Where these processes were slower, invariably the development dynamics were also impeded.

The Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Recovery and Development 1986-1990 adopted a very balanced and far-reaching set of assessments and proposals and has submitted them to the General Assembly for consideration. The recommendations contain a new United Nations agenda for the development of Africa in the 1990s which is based on a renewed commitment by the international community and by Africa to an agenda of cooperation for sustainable social and economic development in the 1990s.

The new Agenda reflects the solidarity among the States members of the United Nations acting in concert to address the critical situation in Africa. We deem it particularly important that the new Agenda has focused on specific goals, and has highlighted both Africa's responsibility and commitment and also the tasks and responsibility of the international community. In this

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regard, it is natural that the role of the United Nations system has been particularly underlined in the implementation of the international Agenda.

Finally, I would like to recall that recently, in Accra, Ghana, the Ministers of the non-aligned countries, in reviewing the critical economic situation in Africa, stressed their full support for the adoption of a new agenda for the 1990s whose priority objectives for international cooperation with Africa would be the accelerated transformation, integration, diversification and growth of the African economies.

The new Agenda must be specific and clearly focused on measurable goals and targets achievable within a well-defined time-frame and with built-in, monitorable performance criteria. The international community should direct its support and commitments specifically towards achieving the broad objectives of the New Agenda so as to achieve a balance between national measures and international action.

The current profound changes in international political and economic relations pose serious challenges to Africa which require urgent consideration of the continent's peculiar economic problems if it is to be saved from further decline in the 1990s.

Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): Against the general background of global economic and political changes in the outlines of the civilization of the twenty-first century, which are becoming ever more distinct, the responsibility of countries and peoples, integrated groupings and economic organizations for the fate of progress and peace is increasing many times over. It is impossible for us to continue our common march along the path of economic development without taking into full and balanced account the

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, USSR)

priorities of all the members of the world community and effectively implementing the economic, environmental and technological parameters for interdependence in our common interests.

This has to do, first and foremost, with those problems whose resonance is not only global, but which, in their everyday interpretation, have a direct linkage with the living conditions of millions of people. Among these problems, unquestionably, is the problem of the critical economic situation in Africa, and that is why the practical solidarity of the States Members of the United Nations in carrying out the agreed actions for Africa, with an optimal combination of their national, regional and international components, is a human imperative.

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, USSR)

A conceptual basis for this is the new United Nations programme to ensure the development of Africa in the 1990s. This programme gives priority to rapid transformation in areas such as these: making provision for integration and diversification; decreasing vulnerability to external upheaval; enhancing dynamism; shifting the emphasis to internal factors in the process of development; and strengthening reliance on one's own forces.

We in the Soviet Union understand the aspiration of the countries of Africa to overcome the crisis in their economic situation, and we support them in that aspiration and in what they are doing to mobilize internal resources as a major factor in economic progress. Economic stability cannot be secured without stimulation of the most effective types of economic activity: the development of entrepeneurship, the establishment of a favourable investment climate, and increased self-sufficiency in food. Significant reserves and diversification in production, transport and energy infrastructures could be achieved through interregional and subregional cooperation. A reduction in military expenditure could be a major means of mobilizing supplemental resources for development, including the development of African countries.

The critical economic situation in Africa is aggravated significantly by the heavy burden of external debt, destabilization of world prices of raw materials, protectionism in trade, and fluctuations in interest and exchange rates. In our view, it is precisely in the context of these problems that the responsibilities and obligations of the international community must be seen. The external-assistance role must be auxiliary, but, though complex, it must also be effective. In this regard, we note the importance of the relevant consensus recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review and the Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, USSR)

Recovery and Development 1986-1990 as they affect these problems: trade and debt; the question of ensuring an adequate flow of resources; economic diversification; and regional integration.

In our view, if we are to secure adequate external conditions for resolution of the economic problems of the African countries - especially the least developed African countries - it is important, first and foremost, that we achieve agreement at the international level, as well as political consensus, on the means of solving the debt problem. The Soviet Union supports the Secretary-General's efforts to find mutually acceptable solutions to the debt crisis, and we support what is being done, by way of multilateral machinery, to coordinate assistance.

The processes of political and economic democratization that are under way in the world are accompanied by a qualitative change in the nature of international relations, and they carry the seeds of a genuinely interdependent economic world. Here, I should like to express emphatically my confidence that the fundamental economic reforms that are being implemented in the Soviet Union will facilitate mutually advantageous cooperation between our country and the African States and will give this cooperation new significance. We believe that economic interaction can most effectively be achieved through a tight meshing of its forums and directions with real economic processes, both internal and global - including broader involvement in Soviet-American cooperation in trade and economic affairs by small and medium-sized enterprises, private firms and cooperatives; the development of entrepeneurship and direct ties; and the use of commercial credits.

We have a common interest in ensuring that Africa enjoys dynamic economic development. A fundamental precondition for the solution of the critical

(Mr. Audryavtsev, USSR)

economic problems of Africa is the harmonization of the mutual rights and duties of the developed countries and the developing countries - indeed, of the entire international community. The Soviet Union, for its part, will do everything possible to promote constructive movement in that direction, as well as consensus and economically rational solutions.

Mr. GAMBARI (Nigeria): It will be recalled that, in its resolution 45/178 A of 19 December 1990, the General Assembly decided to establish an Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole for the purpose of preparing for the forty-sixth session the final Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990. That programme was decided on by the General Assembly five years ago amidst high hopes, unqualified optimism and general expectation that the social and economic problems of Africa would receive from the international community the attention that it merited. The basic thrust, therefore, was that the international community would provide increased financial resources and technical assistance to enable African countries to achieve, among other things, sustained economic development, the development of human resources, and the diversification and expansion of trade.

African Governments, for their part, committed themselves irrevocably to the pursuit of policies and programmes to secure an improvement in the economic situation of the region. Their commitment found expression in various fundamental reforms and adjustment programmes, which have been carried out in the last few years; this process has resulted in pain and great sacrifice for the peoples of those countries.

I wish to emphasize that the basic goal envisaged for this new agenda is an acceleration in the economic and social transformation of Africa. That

(Mr. Gambari, Nigeria)

poses as great a challenge to the international community as to the African continent itself. In the context of this shared responsibility, African Governments and peoples fully accept that our salvation lies truly in our own hands. But we also know that progress cannot be made in the absence of a conducive and congenial external environment. African Governments and peoples have already mapped out their goals and strategies. By adopting the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation, the African Governments have committed themselves to a new development ethic - that people should be fully involved in the process of development. In fact, recent political developments in our continent have confirmed Africa's determination to link good government, transparency and accountability to our development efforts. However, if we are to succeed in this quest, the international community must assume a full complementary role by providing timely and adequate support for African development.

(Mr. Gambari, Nigeria)

The report before the Assembly, which was drawn up last September, was painstakingly fashioned and negotiated by all - I stress, by all - the parties concerned, in full agreement and in recognition of the urgent need to assist Africa in surmounting its economic problems. We expect, therefore, that the international community, in cooperation with Africa, will now strive to see that the new Agenda is implemented in accordance with Africa's needs and aspirations.

It is hoped that the international community will accept the principle of shared responsibility and full partnership with Africa and firmly commit itself to giving far more support than it did during the period of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. Africa is not and should not be made an irrelevant variable in the world development equation. The international community must therefore play a decisive role in Africa's determined quest to overcome its stalled development. We are, however, encouraged by the spirit and interest exhibited by all parties during the last and final review exercise and by the various statements of assurances made this morning.

What we now have is a new Agenda for the 1990s. It may, of course, not be the best that we all could have hoped for; nevertheless, we strongly believe that it should be given a chance. The demonstration of unanimity and common approach by the Ad Hoc Committee was indicative of the resolve of the international community to find serious and urgent solutions to the protracted and complex problems of Africa.

In closing, I wish to speak on behalf of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who is also the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), in expressing our deep appreciation to the Chairman of

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the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole, Ambassador Huslid of Norway, for his report, and also in expressing our gratitude to all the other delegations that participated in the exercise of the final review of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. We are particularly heartened by the unequivocal statements of support for the new Agenda which we have heard from all speakers in the Assembly this morning. I wish, therefore, to commend the report for adoption by consensus without any further delay.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): In accordance with the requests of a number of delegations, the vote on the draft resolution contained in document A/46/41, section IV, will be postponed to a date that will be announced later.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.